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IS OUR PROTESTANTISM STILL PROTESTANT?

WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

There are two classes of people who have an interest in the question which we have proposed for discussion. It may be asked by those who believe that in historic Protestantism we have the true and final form of religion, and who therefore view with alarm any radical departure from the position of the earlier Reformers. In this case the question whether our Protestantism is still Protestant will mean the inquiry whether our modern liberal Christianity has so far departed from the fundamental principles of the Reformation that its title to the name of evangelical Christianity may rightly be called in question. On the other hand, the inquiry may be made by those who believe that historic Protestantism represents a stage of religious development which the world is destined to outgrow. In the latter case the meaning of the question will be whether the process of theological reconstruction has gone so far that the new type of religious thought and life which is expected to supersede the old can at last be clearly differentiated from its predecessor.

And as there are two senses in which the question may be asked, so also there are two ways in which it may be answered. One may be persuaded that, in spite of all changes in detail, modern Protestantism is still true to the principles of the Reformation, so that, great as is the revolution which thought has undergone during the century that has closed, it has introduced "no new phase in the history of the Christian religion." Or, one may conclude that, whatever flashes of insight the Reformers may have had, the religion which was the final outgrowth of their protest was essentially a child of the past, and is to be classed with Catholicism as a religion of authority, over against the new religion of the spirit toward which the modern world is more or less consciously striving. The former is the position taken by Har-

nack in his recent lectures on the essence of Christianity.¹ The latter is the view which Sabatier has expressed in his suggestive book entitled, *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*.²

It is evident that the contrast thus indicated is of momentous importance both for thought and life. It affects our attitude toward all the important problems of scientific theology. If we give Harnack's answer, we shall distinguish, as he does, three great types of historic Christianity, the Greek, the Roman, and the Protestant; and modern Protestant Christianity, however important its differences from the older form of Protestantism may seem to us to be, will still represent "no new phase in the history of the Christian religion." If, on the other hand, we agree with Sabatier, we shall still distinguish three types of historic Christianity, but in this case the line will be drawn between the older and the newer Protestantism. We shall have two great examples of the religion of authority, the religion of the church and the religion of the book; and over against these, as a third, the religion of the spirit, which is the ideal not only of modern Protestantism but of all true men, whether Catholic or Protestant, who have felt the influences of the new age in which we live.

No less important are the practical bearings of the question. If the former view be taken, then there is a real kinship between our modern religious life and the past of which it is the outgrowth, and the effort to bring out this community of spirit and to illustrate in detail the points of agreement between our present ideals and those of our fathers becomes legitimate and necessary. If, on the other hand, we believe that we have entered upon a new stage of religious development, then the attempt to gloss over by smooth words the differences which obtain is dangerous and misleading, and the true duty of the religious teacher is to emphasize the contrast by every means at his command.

Such, then, are some of the issues involved in the question proposed for our discussion. We shall endeavor to determine

¹ *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Leipzig, 1900 (English translation, *What is Christianity?* London, 1901, p. 299).

² *Les religions d'autorité et la religion de l'esprit*, Paris, 1904 (English translation, New York, 1904).

whether Harnack or Sabatier is in the right, or whether some third position is possible, from which the truth for which both alike contend may find due recognition.

On the face of it there is much to be said on either side. In support of Harnack's contention it may be urged that the Reformation began as a protest against ecclesiastical authority. It was the assertion of the right of the individual to think his own thoughts, realize his own life, and find his way to God in his own manner. Liberty of conscience has ever been a fundamental tenet of Protestantism, and the equality of all believers in rights and duties is its article of the standing or falling church. Judged by this test, modern Protestantism stands for no new ideal. It is only the clearer expression and more consistent use of principles already accepted. It is the application to traditional Protestantism itself of a method, the right of which the Reformers clearly recognized, but which the conditions of their time did not permit them adequately to employ.

Yet, on the other hand, there is much also to be said for Sabatier's position. Judged historically, and not simply in its ideal, Protestantism has too often deserved the French theologian's description. To be sure, it has substituted the Bible for the Church as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, but the attributes which it has assigned to the book have not differed in kind from those which Catholicism has ascribed to the church. To Protestant, as to Catholic, unquestioning obedience to an infallible authority once for all given has been the one sure test of true religion. No doubt, in pressing back of the Church to the Bible, Protestantism was a means of reforming many flagrant abuses and so preparing the way for the better insight which we now possess. But it may be argued with no little plausibility that the means by which this reformation was brought about is the clearest proof of the gulf which separates the older from the newer faith. For, in turning back to the Bible and finding in a historic revelation, given once for all, the sole norm and final test of truth, historic Protestantism contradicts the fundamental assumption of modern life, which is that God is a God of progress, and therefore that his final word to man is to be sought in the present and in the future rather than in the past.

It is clear that before we can rightly determine the issues thus raised we must face the prior question as to the nature of Protestantism. In order to tell whether modern Protestantism is Protestant, we must first understand what it means to be Protestant, and especially what is the distinctive mark by which Protestantism is separated from the type of religion we call Catholic. We shall be helped in this discrimination by a brief review of some answers which on closer inspection prove to be inadequate.³

One of the most familiar of these is that which makes the difference between Protestantism and Catholicism synonymous with that between experimental and traditional religion. According to this view Protestantism is the religion of freedom and immediacy. It passes over all that is external and secondary in its effort to gain direct access to God in the personal religious experience. It needs no mediator between God and man, because it has learned to know God at first hand. Its faith is not grounded on the testimony of any man or church, but upon the witness of God himself speaking directly through his spirit to the heart of each believer. This fresh and vital aspect of Protestantism has been strikingly emphasized by Mr. Santayana in his recent book, *Reason in Religion*. Protestantism, he tells us, is "the religion of pure spontaneity, of emotional freedom."⁴ It is instinctively trustful and self-assertive, "more primitive than reason, and even than man."⁵ In contrast with this young and virile faith,

³ Under Protestantism, in the sense in which the term is used in the present discussion, we include all the different phases of religious life and thought which were the outcome of the general movement we call the Reformation. Professor Troeltsch, in his recent suggestive essay entitled *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt* (1906), uses the term in a narrower sense, to describe the type of thought represented by the more conservative Reformers, Zwingli, Luther and Calvin, as distinct from that of the more extreme independents, who carried their individualism to greater lengths. Such a restriction of the term, however useful for the purposes of scientific discussion, I believe to be unjustified by historic usage, and to lead to an undue minimizing of the novel elements inherent in the new faith. The genius of a new type is best disclosed by a study of its more advanced representatives, and the nature of Protestantism cannot be justly estimated till we have given full weight to the evidence afforded by the history of the Baptist and other early independent movements, whose break with the older Christian tradition was more radical than that of the Lutheran and Calvinistic bodies.

⁴ Page 115.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 122.

Catholicism represents a later and less confident form of religion. It is religion grown cautious through the experience of repeated failures, timorous, self-distrustful, content to take God at second-hand because it has lost faith in its ability to find God for itself.

No doubt there is truth in this contrast. It is true that the Catholicism of the sixteenth century had become largely traditional, and that Protestantism represented a genuine revival of vital religion; but as an expression of the fundamental difference between the two types this distinction is clearly inadequate. The contrast between vital and traditional religion is not confined to any age or any type of faith. Protestantism has had its full share of traditionalists, and Catholicism, in its finer expressions, is not without acquaintance with the freedom and spontaneity of the Christian life. The Westminster doctrine of the Testimonium Spiritus Sancti⁶ may be paralleled in almost so many words in the language of the Vatican Council.⁷ Nor is the similarity in doctrine alone. The great saints of the Catholic Church, men like Bernard and women like St. Theresa, were conscious of no less direct communion with God than Luther and Wesley among the Protestants. And surely if a spirit of virility and of youth trusting in its own instincts and gladly reaching out into the unknown world in simple trust that it would answer to the claim of the spirit within be sufficient to stamp a man a Protestant as distinct from a Catholic, then the gentle saint of Assisi from

⁶ Confession of Faith, i, 5: "We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."

⁷ Chapter iii, quoted by Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, II, 243: "And the Catholic Church teaches that this faith, which is the beginning of man's salvation, is a supernatural virtue, whereby, inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe that the things which he has revealed are true; not because of the intrinsic truth of the things, viewed by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself, who reveals them, and who can neither be deceived nor deceive."

whom the Franciscans claim their descent must hold the foremost place among the heroes of Protestantism.

Nor is the difference between Protestantism and Catholicism synonymous with the difference between an individualistic and a social religion. This too has often been affirmed. Catholicism, we are told, stands for the principle of churchly mediation, which Protestantism rejects. So great a name as Schleiermacher may be quoted as authority for this method of stating the contrast. In his *Glaubenslehre*⁸ he tells us that the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism may be expressed by saying that in Catholicism the relation of the believer to Christ is made dependent upon his relation to the Church, whereas in Protestantism the believer's relation to the Church is made dependent upon his relation to Christ.

Here too, no doubt, there is a truth which needs to find expression in our definition. Protestantism began as a protest against the abuse of ecclesiastical authority, and ever since it has stood for the liberty of the individual. It has been the religion of free men, willing, if necessary, to break with existing forms of social life when constrained to do so by their conscience. Yet we may easily be tempted to carry the contrast too far. It was not against the Church as such that Protestantism protested, but against a church which had grown unchristlike and corrupt. The last thing that was in the mind of Luther and the other Reformers was the substitution of an individualistic for a social religion. What they wished to do was to replace a false church by a church that was true. The Bible is not to be understood as the substitute for the churchly principle, but as its clearer definition. It is the book which shows us what kind of a church God requires and what kind of mediation really leads to him. This is not the mediation of priests, who prescribe works of penance through which a store of merit may be heaped up to the credit of the performer, but of living men, who through the communion of their own souls with God have learned his message of redemption and peace, and pass on the good news to their brother men that they too may find salvation. The typical individualist is not the Protestant who goes out among his fellows to preach the

good news of salvation through Christ and establish his Kingdom among men, but the mystic who in his concern for his own soul's salvation withdraws into a hermitage or a monastery that he may commune with God in peace. Protestantism has had its hermits, its men of narrow and self-centred life. But it has been Catholicism rather than Protestantism which has been the home of the individualistic ideal as such.

What then is the real difference between Protestantism and Catholicism? We have already anticipated it in what has just been said. It is in the nature of the mediation which is admitted. The Protestant affirms that this mediation must be rational,⁹ while the Catholic denies that this must necessarily be the case. What distinguishes the Protestant from the Catholic is not that the one is more earnest and devout in his religious life than the other, nor that the one accepts while the other rejects an external standard, but that the standard which the Protestant accepts wins assent because of its own inherent nature, whereas in Catholicism it is received on grounds which are independent of its content.

This does not mean, of course, that Catholic theologians deny that reason has its use in religion, or regard with disfavor the attempt to give a rational proof of Christian doctrine. Nowhere has speculation been carried to bolder heights than in the Church which produced an Anselm and an Aquinas. But it is meant that the rational insight for which the Catholic longs is a consequence rather than a condition of his faith. *Credo ut intelligam* is the Catholic formula; and faith for the ordinary Christian does not necessarily involve an inner assent to the content of the message, but only reverent submission to the authority which promulgates it. When the Vatican Council would add rational evidence of the authority of the Scripture to the inner witness of the

⁹ The word "rational" is not used here in the narrow sense in which it is sometimes employed in philosophical discussion to denote the processes of the logical understanding as distinct from the emotions and the will (e.g. by our modern pragmatists in their attack upon intellectualism), but as a comprehensive term to include all the processes by which man, as a reasonable being, reacts upon his moral and intellectual environment. From the point of view of our present discussion the questions in dispute between the pragmatists and the intellectualists have to do with the interpretations of the word "rational," and the contrast here made would retain its validity, whichever of the rival interpretations should ultimately prevail.

Holy Spirit, upon which, in common with the Westminster divines, it makes saving faith depend, it is not upon the inherent evidence of the majesty and beauty of its content so graphically set forth in the Confession that it relies, but upon the miracle and prophecy by which the divine commission of its authors was attested and sealed.¹⁰ The change is significant. In the one case the assent, when it comes, is to the content of the message; in the other it is to the authority of the messenger.

We see now why mysticism has found so congenial a home in the Catholic Church. For mysticism is that type of religion in which thought is transcended, and man communes with the Eternal in the immediacy of feeling. It is the religion of mystery, of awe, of ecstasy, touching the intangible, hearing the inaudible, seeing the invisible, possessing the incommunicable. For the God of the mystic no rational proof can be given, since he cannot be described in words. It was such a God as this that Newman found, when, after his years of wandering, he sought refuge at last in the bosom of Mother Church. The joy which sings in the closing chapter of his *Apologia* is not the satisfaction which comes from insight into truth, but the peace which follows the relinquishment of a hopeless quest.

We perceive, also, why the sacraments should hold so prominent a place among the means of grace of Catholicism. For by the sacrament a way is found through which divine influence may be communicated without the necessity of the conscious participation of the recipient. When the priest sprinkles the water and repeats the trinitarian formula over the dying child, regeneration follows, whether the child or his parents have any understanding of the meaning of what has been done or not. When the priest himself is set apart by ordination to the sacerdotal office, he receives the power to transmit the divine grace to others, however unworthy he may prove to be himself. In each case the sacrament

¹⁰ Chapter iii, quoted by Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, III, 243: "Nevertheless, in order that the obedience of our faith might be in harmony with reason, God willed that to the interior help of the Holy Spirit there should be joined exterior proofs of his revelation; to wit, divine facts, and especially miracles and prophecies, which, as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain proofs of his divine revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all men."

works *ex opere operato*, that is, by virtue of the mere fact that it has been performed. Faith may be a result of its performance; it is not a condition of its effect.

The separation between the means used and the effect produced appears most clearly in the Catholic view of doctrine. To the Catholic, doctrine is dogma, that is to say, truth promulgated by authority and having the force of law. If it commend itself to the reason, so much the better; but it is not upon this fact that its claim to be received is based. That depends solely upon the endorsement of the properly constituted ecclesiastical authorities. Like the Trinity in Newman's famous example,¹¹ it may lie in a realm where neither logic nor experience can follow it, and contain propositions which to the unaided human reason seem to involve a contradiction. None the less, if the Church declares it to be true, it is the duty of the Catholic to believe it. For the soul's salvation, an implicit faith is just as effective as one which is intelligent and reasonable.

To the Protestant, on the other hand, such a conception of faith seems destructive of all that is most precious in religion. The faith for which Luther contended is not mere belief. Still less is it willingness to receive upon testimony matters incapable of experimental verification. It is the response of the whole man to an object inherently worthy. It is the assent of the will to an ideal presented to the mind by a person deserving of confidence. As such, it is at once ethical and rational, involving both trust and obedience. It requires, on the one hand, insight into the character and the purpose of the person claiming allegiance, and, on the other, willingness to follow that insight wherever it may lead.

Such being the conception of faith, it is easy to see why it should hold the central place in the theology of Protestantism. Where faith is understood in the Catholic sense as belief upon testimony, it is manifestly inadequate unless supplemented by works. Indeed, it is itself of the nature of a work; since it is one among other conditions that the Church prescribes, upon the fulfilment of which a man's salvation depends. But if faith means trust in a person worthy to be trusted, carrying with it the inner response

¹¹ *Apologia*, chap. v, p. 240 (London, 1890).

of the whole being to the ideals and purposes which he reveals, then it is clear that it must be the all-comprehending Christian virtue, including within itself all else, and of itself alone sufficient for salvation.

This explains the central place which the Word holds among the means of grace of Protestantism. The word stands for the rational element in religion. Through the word the Gospel is presented to the mind and the conscience of men in such a form that each is able to apprehend its truth for himself and put it to the test of his own experience. When Luther translated the Bible into the language of the common people, that the printing press might scatter it broadcast through all the homes of Germany, he put an end, once and for all, so far as Protestantism is concerned, to the old notion of an implicit faith, and substituted for the magical salvation of the older sacramentarianism a salvation that was at once ethical and rational.

No doubt it is true that the full consequences of this principle were not at first drawn. The Reformers did not always distinguish clearly between the Gospel and the book in which it was enshrined. The old Catholic ideal of an unchanging dogma still lived on in the new environment. The very clearness and intensity of the new conviction made it difficult for those who held it to recognize the possibility of any difference of interpretation. The authority of the Scripture was insensibly extended from the plain and self-evidencing truths which admit of experimental verification to the more recondite matters which seemed to follow therefrom "by good and necessary consequence."¹² So, in due time, there grew up in Protestantism a religion of tradition, dealing with matters inaccessible to human reason, and received, like the dogmas of the Catholic Church, on grounds extrinsic to their content. Looking at the scholastic Protestantism of the seventeenth century, with its elaborate doctrinal systems and its *jure divino* ecclesiasticism, it is easy to see in it, with Sabatier, only a new form of Catholicism, without the venerable antiquity or the æsthetic charm which give dignity to the old.

And yet such an identification would be mistaken. For all

¹² Confession of Faith, i, 6.

its outward points of similarity with Catholicism, historic Protestantism, even in its most scholastic form, is separated from the older religion by a difference so significant as to constitute it a distinct type. This difference is found, as we have seen, in its view of the nature and grounds of faith. To Protestantism in all its forms faith is a personal act involving the whole man—reason, as well as feeling and will. To Catholicism this need not be the case. In Catholicism rational insight into truth, if attained, is the result of a previous act of blind submission. In Protestantism the duty of accepting mysteries (in the Catholic sense) is inferred—illegitimately, as we now see—from their connection with truths already verified in experience. In Catholicism we have a rational system erected upon a foundation which is non-rational. In Protestantism credence is asked for dogmas surpassing reason in the name of a rational faith.

As between Harnack and Sabatier, then, we must hold with the former. If our analysis of historic Protestantism is correct, our modern religion is still true to its essential spirit, and the question with which our discussion began must be answered in the affirmative.

But because we refuse to deny our kinship with the older Protestantism and overlook the differences which separate it from Catholicism, it does not follow that the changes which have been introduced by modern thought are few or unimportant. Modern Protestantism may be Protestant, but it is modern also. It remains to consider what is meant by this ambiguous word, and what is its bearing upon the problems which now engage us. We may find, before we are through, that Harnack passes too easily over the difficulties which Sabatier raises, and feel obliged to question the accuracy of his statement that since the Reformation "no new phase in the history of the Christian religion has appeared."

What then is the distinguishing characteristic of the thought which we call modern? Stated in a single phrase, may we not say that it is the extent to which it recognizes, and the consistency with which it attempts to apply, the principle of development? Where earlier thinkers regarded reality as something fixed and unchanging, and found in immutability the surest test of truth, we see all things in a state of flux, and classify objects in an ascend-

ing series according to their capacity for progress.¹³ Where the old theology placed God outside the world in some distant heaven, finding his revelation in those exceptional events in which alone it was believed that the infinite and absolute could enter our world of the finite and the relative, we find God everywhere at work in his world, and see in all life the revelation of a spiritual personality which is its immanent ground. Finally, where our fathers looked back upon the past as the golden age, and regarded that institution or doctrine as most pure which could be proved to have altered least from the time of its origin or its promulgation, we look forward to the future for the clearest manifestation of truth, and put our absolute at the end of the world-process rather than at the beginning.

It is difficult to exaggerate the greatness of this change. It affects every department of our thought and life. It has reconstituted our science, rewritten our history, and is transforming our social, our economic, and our political ideals. It would be strange indeed if it did not leave its traces on our theology. Comparing the view of even so advanced a man as Luther, who held that Christian doctrine had existed unchanged from the beginning of the world, and that the Trinity and the Incarnation were the subjects of discussion for our first parents in Paradise, with that of our modern scientific theology, which believes in the gradual ascent of man from a primitive state of savagery and barbarism, and conceives of Christ as limited both in knowledge and in power by the conditions of his environment, it is hard, in spite of Harnack's great authority, to resist the conviction that the change through which theological thought is passing in our day is so momentous that the historian of the future, if not of the present, will feel constrained to date from it "a new phase in the history of Christianity."

If, then, we object to Sabatier's classification, it is not because

¹³ No doubt it is true that the belief in progress, like every other characteristic idea of modern life, has its antecedents in the past. The notion of development plays an important rôle in the philosophy of Aristotle, and it recurs now and again in later Christian thought. What it is here intended to assert is simply that the systematic employment of the idea of development for the definition of reality and the explanation of life is of comparatively recent date, and constitutes the distinguishing mark of the type of thought which we call modern.

it exaggerates the contrast between the older and the newer Protestantism, but because it fails to show clearly wherein the true nature of their difference is to be found. This does not consist in the introduction of a new principle, but in the application of an old principle to a new environment. In the last analysis there are but two attitudes in which one may approach the ultimate problems of life. One may believe that the reason is the most trustworthy guide of life, and that the satisfaction of one's longings and the impulse to one's activities must be sought in objects and ideals which commend themselves to the mind and approve themselves to the conscience as inherently worthy. Or one may be persuaded that the ultimate reality is beyond the reach of reason (whether *infra-* or *supra-*rational, as the case may be), and be content to find in external authority a substitute for rational faith. The former we have called the Protestant, the latter the Catholic attitude. What differentiates modern Protestantism from its predecessor is not the fact that it has abandoned the earlier faith in a rational revelation of universal authority, in order to take refuge in some vague religion of the spirit without definite content, but that, whereas the older Protestantism found that revelation in an unchanging system once for all communicated, modern Protestantism finds it in living principles, incarnated in a personal, and therefore a free and expanding, life, and progressively applied and verified in the course of an enlarging experience.

This insistence on the progressive apprehension of truth does not mean that modern Protestantism undervalues, still less that it can dispense with, the revelation of the past. No generation has turned back more eagerly to the sources of the Christian religion than the present, or done more to bring to clear recognition the abiding contribution of Jesus to the religious life of mankind and the unique place held by the book which tells of him among the literatures of the world. But it is meant that the principles which are brought to the interpretation of the book are those which have proved themselves fruitful in the investigations of modern life, and that the proof of the supremacy of the Christ is found in the fact that the ideals which he reveals still maintain their authority in the life of today. It is charac-

teristic of a rational faith that it owns the truth wherever found, and binds together past and present in a unity not otherwise to be attained. Such a unifying world-view the recognition of progress makes possible.

It will help us to understand the true significance of this change in the point of view if we realize that it is not confined to Protestantism. The influences which have forced the recognition of progress in Protestantism have not been without their effect upon the Catholic Church as well. Catholicism also has two varieties, one of which turns its face to the past, and makes the measure of Catholic doctrine and practice the fidelity with which it holds fast an unchanging tradition, and another which faces the future, and founds its claim for the authority of the Church upon the ease with which it can deal with new questions and adapt itself to new conditions. The former of these is illustrated by the Greek, the latter by the modern Roman Church. Greek Catholicism is the Catholicism of the past, priding itself upon its unchangeableness, and measuring its orthodoxy by its inertia. Roman Catholicism is the Catholicism of the present and of the future, alert, adaptable, fertile in resources, quick to learn, ready to apply what it has learned. Greek Catholicism is the religion of Russia and of the East; Roman Catholicism is at home in London and in Berlin, and is nowhere more active and vigorous than in America, the country of freedom and of change. If anything were needed to make us question whether the principle of development were really the exclusive possession of the newer Protestantism, it would be the spectacle of modern Catholic theologians like Loisy¹⁴ invoking this principle against Protestants like Harnack in support of the claims of the Catholic Church. Yet this is what we are seeing today.

One reason why the significance of this change of position is so seldom recognized is the tenacity with which in theory modern Catholicism holds fast to the principle of tradition. The Roman Church today still professes to be what it was in the beginning, and carries back its latest developments both in doctrine and practice to the days of the Apostles. But here, as so often, words

¹⁴ *L'évangile et l'église*, Paris, 1902, p. xxiii. See also Newman's well-known essay on the development of Christian doctrine.

are misleading. The identity of the name covers a radical change in the thing signified. Under the guise of the power to interpret dogma, the Roman church has asserted her power to change it; and, in the act of defining, has dethroned the tradition she professes to venerate. The final authority of modern Catholicism is not the tradition of the past, but the living Church speaking through its living representatives to the issues and the needs of the present, and in this fact lies its strength.

This is the real significance of the dogma of Papal infallibility. It is the public declaration of the emancipation of the Church from the tyranny of the past. It is the affirmation of the right and the power of the Church to deal with the new questions which the new age has brought, without being fettered by the decisions of the ages that are gone. It is the consummation of the process, long ago begun, by which the seat of religious authority has been shifted from Augustine and Aquinas and the fathers of Trent to Leo and Pius and the bishops and cardinals who are their present advisers. The fact that this power may be used, as we see it being used today, in the interest of a reactionary policy, does not lessen the significance of the change which its presence implies. The policy which the present pontiff has inaugurated may be reversed by his successor; and it is upon this possibility that modern liberal Catholics base their hope of the ultimate triumph of their ideals.

The radical difference in point of view thus described has already found theoretical recognition in our text-books in the distinction of two types of Catholicism, the Greek and the Roman. What is needed is a like discrimination between the different types of Protestantism; between the Protestantism which turns its face to the past, and finds God's revelation in an unchanging system contained in an infallible book, and the Protestantism which looks towards the future, finding God's revelation in living principles, incarnated in a person, and hence needing ever new application to the changing conditions of a changing world.

We propose, then, to distinguish four main types of historic Christianity, the Greek, the Roman, the earlier, and the later Protestant; the two former being differentiated from the two latter as Catholic from Protestant by their different conception

of authority, the first and third from the second and fourth as ancient from modern by their attitude to the idea of development.

Such a fourfold division avoids the difficulties to which those of Harnack and Sabatier are alike exposed, while at the same time conserving the truth for which each contends. It has at least three practical advantages over the older classifications. In the first place, it leads to a more adequate appreciation of the causes which give modern Roman Catholicism its strength. Secondly, it gives a truer insight into the actual relation between modern Protestantism and its antecedents. Thirdly, it discriminates more justly between what is distinctive of Christianity as a historical religion and the changing forms in which this distinctive principle has found expression. A word in conclusion as to each of these.

First, as to the true significance of modern Catholicism. The charges which the older Protestant polemic brought against Rome were, first, that it introduced the Church as a mediator between God and the individual, and hence robbed him of his freedom; secondly, that it added to the original message of God in the Scripture the tradition of later ages, and hence obscured the simplicity of the Gospel; thirdly, that in this addition it not only confused but corrupted the truth of God by substituting new, man-made, and often immoral teaching for the original divine revelation. The Rome against which the Reformers fought was a Rome which put between the individual and God an institution tied to a complex, and in part unchristian, tradition, and required of him, on peril of his salvation, a blind submission to her authority. The remedy they proposed was the rejection of the mediatorial function of the Church and a return from the changing tradition of man to the unchanging truth of God in the Scripture.

No doubt it is true that against the more corrupt forms of Roman Catholicism this answer is still effective; but against the Catholicism of our modern age in its best representatives, the Catholicism of a Newman or a Loisy, it is inadequate. The strength of Catholicism lies in the fact that through its living organs it brings God close to the individual, speaking directly to his present need by the lips of living men. Granting that there have been corruptions and mistakes in the past, modern Catholic

theologians tell us that the living Spirit who abides in the Church is able to lift the faithful above them by an interpretation adapted to the present, and so to make the errors of the past serve as guides to larger achievement in the future. And not a few among the more earnest and devout spirits of our day have been found to listen to their appeal. In other words, the strength of modern Catholicism lies precisely in the two points in which the older Protestant polemic found its weakness; first, in its exaltation of the Church, and, secondly, in its power to adapt itself to a changing environment. The weakness of the older Protestantism, on the other hand, lay in its inadequate recognition of the function of the living church and in its attempt to guard against the abuses of change by denying the possibility of progress. In both these points modern Protestantism is learning lessons from the failures of its own past, and in its new social spirit and its larger recognition of progress it is making place in its own way for the truth which gives Rome its strength.

It is only when these admissions have been made and we have heartily made place for the truth for which the Catholic contends that we are in a position to see clearly what is the real difference which separates modern Protestantism from Catholicism in all its forms. This is the fundamental difference in the conception of religious authority. Not in the fact of churchly mediation (for, as we have seen, from one point of view, the Bible itself is but a form of the churchly principle), but in the nature of the church which mediates; not in the recognition of a revelation which requires constant re-interpretation, but in the nature of the revelation accepted, lies the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. The revelation which the Protestant accepts commends itself as inherently true through its adaptation to man's permanent needs, and hence is one to which, when presented, the individual may be safely trusted to make his own response. The revelation on which the Catholic relies, on the other hand, is designed to supplant the incapacity of human nature, and consequently requires for its guarantee some sponsor from without. Rome offers the Church as a substitute because the individual may not be trusted; Protestantism requires the Church as a helper because he may. Rome adds to the original

revelation new interpretations because its meaning is not clear; Protestantism is constantly revising earlier utterances because it is. This fact once clearly seen, the issue is joined at the right place, and the danger which comes from bringing in irrelevancies is avoided.

In the second place, this classification gives us a truer insight into the real relation of modern Protestantism to its antecedents, and hence makes possible a more intelligent and less artificial treatment of its present problems. What unites the earlier Protestantism with the later is its clear recognition of this fundamental antithesis—its insistence upon the direct relationship between the Father God and the individual soul; upon the capacity of man's spirit to apprehend and to respond to divine truth, and hence its substitution for the external constraint of Rome of a more spiritual conception of religious authority. In all this, modern Protestantism is a true child of the Reformation, bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh. What differentiates modern Protestant theologians from even the greatest of their predecessors is the failure of the latter consistently to apply to the object of their faith the same principles which characterized their view of its ground. We have an example of this failure in Melancthon's acceptance¹⁵ of two kinds of doctrines, the former characterized by their immediate adaptation to experience and to be tested thereby, the latter consisting of mysteries to be received on authority because found in the Bible, though incapable of experimental verification. It is further illustrated in the uncertainties of the Westminster doctrine of Scripture, which recognizes the sufficiency of the religious (i.e. experimental) standard for the plain man, while at the same time it insists upon the necessity of an appeal to the original texts for the theologian. It appears most clearly in the prominence of the legal conception in the theology of Protestantism, in spite of its insistence upon the fundamental importance of justification by faith. In all these cases we see the new religious insight struggling in vain with an evil philosophical tradition; the old notion, I mean, of an inaccessible God, which was the worst inheritance of Christianity from Greece. For a time it seemed as if Luther might succeed in breaking away from the hampering

¹⁵ In the second edition of his *Loci Communes*.

tradition, but it was not to be. The old inheritance was too strong, and traditional Protestantism became the bundle of inconsistencies it is to-day, enshrining in its heart a great principle, hampered in its expression by the swaddling clothes of the past. These swaddling clothes modern Protestantism is throwing off. To try to shut our eyes to the fact is to introduce into our modern religious life an element of unreality. To carry our protest so far as to be blind to our own paternity is to be equally untrue.

Finally, this classification opens the way for a juster discrimination between what is distinctive of Christianity as a historic religion and the many changing forms in which this distinctive principle has from time to time found expression. The divisions which we have sought to distinguish are, we repeat again, not arbitrary, but the expression within Christianity of permanent types of the religious life, found to a greater or less extent in all religions, and grounded in deep-seated differences in human nature. All religions have their Catholics and their Protestants, their scribes and their prophets, their traditionalists and their men of independent insight, their mystics and their men of rational faith. Each is the scene of the unending strife of the forces of stagnation and of progress, the static and dynamic of the religious life. In all, these different influences combine in various ways and present us with types analogous to those we have distinguished. They are in Christianity because they are in life; but Christianity itself is something different from these. It is the new impulse imparted to the life of humanity by the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the new insight he brought, the new stream of tendency which, beginning from him, has entered into the strife of human forces, playing upon and being played upon by them all. This impulse, this insight, this influence, are not confined to any one of the four types of historic Christianity; they are found in greater or less degree in them all. Christianity is greater than Protestantism even at its best, and no treatment of the historic Christian types is adequate which does not make this clear.

But because Christ may be found in all the historic forms, it does not follow that he is found in all with equal clearness and adequacy. Without falling into the Hegelian error of identifying the order of logic with the order of history, it is possible to believe

that each of the great types of historic Christianity which has appeared in the course of the historic development represents a step in advance. The Roman religion of progress is truer than the Greek religion of stagnation, and the Protestantism which insists upon bringing all so-called progress to the test of reason represents a step beyond both. We should belie our spiritual ancestry if we did not recognize the great contribution of the Reformation to human progress and jealously guard the truth which the Reformers won; but there is a work still to do, and that is to present the Christ whom all Christians own as Lord, and whom the earlier Protestants recognized as their individual Saviour by his direct appeal to each man's heart and conscience—to present this living, spiritual Christ in his larger social relations as the inspiration and the goal of progress. This is the task of the theology of the future.